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## *Trust in Experts Blamed in Bay of Pigs 'Error'*

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The accounts of the Bay of Pigs disaster that have come out this week—principally Arthur Schlesinger's in *Life* and Theodore Sorensen's in *Look*—add little to what has been common knowledge about the episode.

Yet they make fascinating and sobering reading at a time when the United States Government is once again embarking on a military episode about which the leaders of the Administration have grave doubts, a campaign that is being pursued by the Administration not out of genuine enthusiasm but because it sees no alternative.

Both Sorensen and Schlesinger stress one important detail not much emphasized in the past. This is the notion that there was—or so they report President Kenne-

dy believed—a fall-back option in the invasion plan.

### Guerilla War Plan

The President," says Sorensen, "thought he was approving a plan whereby the exiles, should they fail to expand and hold a beachhead, could take up guerrilla warfare with other rebels in the mountains."

And Schlesinger says that CIA Chief Allen Dulles "told Mr. Kennedy that he felt much more confident about success than he ever had in the case of Guatemala, where a CIA operation had overthrown a leftwing government in 1954. Moreover, if worst came to worst and the invaders were beaten on the beaches, then, Dulles and Bissell said, they could easily 'melt away' into the mountains."

[Richard Bissell, the CIA man in charge of the operation, is now an executive with United Aircraft.]

Thus, in the accounts of two of his closest associates, Mr. Kennedy thought he was approving a plan which did not rely absolutely on the ability of exiles to establish and hold a conventional beachhead.

### Option Discarded

According to Sorensen the CIA discarded this option as infeasible, but did not tell the President they had done so, nor tell the exiles that this was what the President had in mind should the invasion fail.

On the whole, both accounts present the now-familiar picture of a new President and a new Administration finding the government already deeply committed to a plan, endorsed by the Joint Chiefs and enthusiastically promoted by the CIA.

It is reasonably clear, although unstated, in Schlesinger's and Sorensen's accounts that one—although only one—of the things that

pushed Mr. Kennedy ahead was his awareness that even if the experts were wrong in urging the landing he could never prove them wrong once he called it off; and that the Republicans would never stop insisting that he had thrown away Gen. Eisenhower's carefully worked out plans to get rid of Fidel Castro.

The picture, then, that Schlesinger and Sorensen present is one in which the primary blame must be placed where both report Mr. Kennedy himself placed it—on the President.

But it is a picture that suggests it would be hard to conceive of anyone else in Mr. Kennedy's position canceling the plans, although another man might have gone on to openly commit American forces, avoiding an immediate disaster at the risk of a much larger one.

### Conceded Own Error

And it is a picture that places Mr. Kennedy's error—again, as he himself placed it—not on his judgments on the arguments presented to him but on his willingness to trust expert advice coming from men who could not be assumed to fully share his own view of broad policy and who necessarily did not share his own responsibility for overall policy.

"All my life I've known better than to depend on the experts," Sorensen quotes Mr. Kennedy. "How could I have been so stupid, to let them go ahead?"

In both accounts, there is the suggestion that the most basic source of the misjudgments was an unspoken assumption among the men who planned the operation that if worst came to worst it would be saved by open U.S. intervention.

If this is correct, then Mr. Kennedy avoided facing the worst by assuming that

there was a guerrilla fall-back plan, while the experts avoided it by assuming that the President would change his mind and authorize open U.S. intervention.